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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 OMB-01 IO-12 RSR-01 /118 W
---------- 105475
R 041415 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3573
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 3882

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK, BG
SUBJ: INDIAN INITIATIVE TO RESOLVE IMPASSE ON SUBCONTINENT.

REF: NEW DELHI 3730

SUMMARY: INDIAN " INITIATIVE" TO SEND SPECIAL EMISSARY TO DACCA AND POSSIBLY ON TO ISLAMABAD STEMS FROM INDIAN DESIRE TO RID ITSELF OF POWS. THIS NECESSARY TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AND TO ATTENUATE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CRITICISM. INDIA ALSO WISHES TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH, HOWEVER, AND HAKSAR IS NOW ASSESSING HOW FAR MUJIB IS WILLING TO GO. WE BELIEVE THAT IF BANGLADESH DOES NOT CONCUR IN SUBSTANTIVE INITIATIVE, INDIA WILL PROBABLY SEEK AGREEMENT ON SOME GESTURE TO IMPROVE INDIA' S IMAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESSURES ON INDIA: INDIA HAS VALID REASONS FOR WISHING TO RID ITSELF OF POWS. MOST IMPORTANT, THEY ARE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND CHINA AND INHIBIT
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RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. MOREOVER, WHILE INDIA IS LEARNING TO LIVE WITH INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM, IT IS STILL UNCOMFORTABLE WHEN UNDER FIRE AND WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO GET RID OF POWS BEFORE NEXT UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (BRITISH, FOR EXAMPLY, HAVE ALERTED MEA TO PROBLEMS THEY ARE HAVING MAINTAINING SILENCE ON POWS IN VIEW OF RISING CRITICISM IN UK). INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM IS SO FAR LIMITED TO PRESS AND TO SWATANTRA AND PRO- MOSCOW COMMUNIST PARTIES, BUT WE BELIEVE ELEMENTS OF CONGRESS ALSO UNEASY. INDIAN MILITARY FAVORS EARLY RETURN OF POWS. ALSO, MRS. GANDHI MAY HAVE HER EYE ON 1974 ELECTIONS IN POPULOUS STATE OF UTTAR PRADESH, WHERE MUSLIMS REPORTEDLY UNHAPPY WITH CONTINUED DETENTION OF CO- RELIGIONIST POWS. GOI MUST ALSO BE PREPARED RESPOND TO HINDU- NATIONALIST JANA SANGH CHARGES SIMLA PACT WAS MISTAKE AND SELLOUT.

2. HAKSAR MISSION: MEA BANGLADESH DIVISION JOINT SECRETARY KP. P. S. MENON TOLD ACTING POL COUNSELOR APRIL 4 THAT HAKSAR MISSION TO DACCA SHOULD BE DEEN AS PART OF CONTINUING EFFORT TO IMPLEMENT SIMLA PACE. THIS EFFORT WAS SUSPENDED TEMPORARILY AS RESULT BHUTTO' S POSITION THAT NO PROGRESS POSSIBLE UNTIL AFTER BANGLADESH ELECTIONS. INDIA WISHES DEVELOP JOINT POSITION FOR USE IF BHUTTO SHOULD TAKE INITIATIVE (WHICH INDIA STILL HOPES MAY OCCUR) OR IF INDIA/ BANGLADESH DECIDE TO MAKE PROPOSAL THEMSELVES. MENON MAINTAINED THAT REPORTS THAT HAKSAR JULD GO ON TO ISLAMABAD ARE " KITE- FLYING". HE ARGUED THIS WOULD IMPLY INDIA MEDIATION BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND BAGLADESH, WHICH OBVIOUSLY ABSURD. HOWEVER, STATESMAN APRIL 4 REPORTS FROM DACCA THAT HAKSAR VISIT TO ISLAMABAD CONSIDERED ALMOST CERTAIN BY DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES IF HE CAN GET DACCA' S CONCURRENCE FOR FURTHER STEPS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS IN SUB-CONTINENT.

3. INDIAN PROPOSALS: MENON CLAIMS HAKSAR GOING ONLY TO ASSESS EXTENT TO WHICH MUJIB PREPARED TO GO AND IS NOT CARRYING SPECIFIC PROPOSALS. BUT PRESS CONTINUES TO RAISE IDEA OF PARTIAL PACKAGE INVOLVING EXCHANGE OF MOST OF POWS FOR MOST OF BANGALEES IN PAKISTAN, WITHOUT RECOGNITION. MENON IN HIS OWN ANALYSIS OF BANGLADESH STATEMENTS SUGGESTED RECOGNITION NOT AS IMPORTANT AS RETURN OF BANGLAEES, AND JOURNALIST CONTACT CLAIMS FONMIN TOLD HIM SOME DAYS AGO SUBCONTINENT COULD GET ALONG WITH RETURN OF MOST OF POWS BUT WITHOUT RECOGNITION. ANOTHER JOURNALIST (DILIP MUKERJEE OF TIMES OF INDIA) INDEPENDENTLY RAISED SAME CONFIDENTIAL

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POSSIBILITY AND ADDED THAT PROBLEM OF POW TRIALS COULD BE HANDLED

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IF PAKISTAN ALSO KEPT BACK SOME BANGLAEES FOR TRIAL. HOWEVER, OUR CONTACTS CERTAINLY DO NOT RULE OUT A MORE COMPLETE PACKAGE INVOLVING RECOGNITION AS WELL AS RETURN OF POWS, BENGALEES AND/ OR BIHARIS.

5. CONSTRAINTS ON INDIA: WHATEVER KIND OF JOINT POSITION INDIA SEEKS, DEGREE OF PRESSURE IT APPLIES TO BANGLADESH IS LIMITED BY ITS DESIRE TO STAY ON GOOD TERMS WITH BANGLADESH. INDIA HAS SAID PUBLICLY THAT BANGLADESH MUST BE " ASSOCIATED" WITH ANY NEGOTIATIONS. THIS INDIAN SENSITIVITY TO BANGLADESH INTERESTS MAY ENABLE HAKSAR TO SPEAK PERSUASIVELY ON NEED FOR PROGRESS.

6. PROSPECTS: WE INTERPRET HAKSAR VISIT AS GENUINE GOI EFFORT TO BREAK IMPASSE. HIS ONWARD TRAVEL AND PROSPECTS FOR RESOLUTION OBVIOUSLY DEPEND ON WHAT HE GETS IN DACCA. BELIEVE THAT GOI WILL SEEK, AS
MINIMUM, SOME GESTURE IN ORDER TO IMPROVE GOI
IMAGE AT HOME AND ABROAD.
MOYNIHAN

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To: BOMBAY
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